

Language Shift: A Case Study Among the Natives Speakers Of “Kaachi” Language In Tokuroano of Oti Region.

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Abstract

This research paper investigated the causes of language shift from the 'Kete-krachi-kaachi' language which is one of the Guan languages to Akuapem, all of the Kwa languages in Ghana. The study adopted a case study design and made some suggestions for the maintenance of Kaachi language in a community called Tokuroano located in the Kete- Krachi East District of the Oti Region of Ghana. It must be noted that, the people in question are krachi's and the language they speak is called "KAACHI". The strategies used by the researcher were questionnaires, interview and observation. The paper discussed the domains of language use, the frameworks of the Gaelic Arvanitika model and the marked bilingualism model under the causality-based perspective and process based perspective to analyze the causes and processes involved in the language shift situation.

KEYWORDS: Language shift, language maintenance, Tokuroano, Native Speakers, Krachi-Kaachi, Akuapem

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a major tool that every community uses in communicating or disseminating information from one person to another and from one generation to another. It forms part of their culture as it identifies them to be a unique group of people with one common goal. You mention or speak a language and you will be associated with a particular group of people. So each community with common cultural and social background uses a common language and that binds them together. This language then becomes the mother tongue of the indigenes of the community and it is acquired just at birth. With this, the indigenes becomes monolinguals, since a community cannot be an island where there are no movement to and fro, it means that every community is susceptible to internal and external geographical mobility of different speakers these can make the community stand a very high risk of being endangered when it gets contact with other languages which may result in a sociolinguistic change. The less dominant

language which may be the mother tongues linguistically under goes some alterations such as phonological, syntactic, and semantic. These situations can be the attitude of the natives and their choice of language and the domains it is used (Stain, 2014).

The major occupation of the people of Tokuroano is farming. They are major producers of yams, maize, cassava, groundnuts, and other crops in the Oti Region. This has attracted a lot of people to this particular area, either to engage in farming or trading. The continue engagement of these traders and settlers with different ethnic background and languages has led to the situation where new languages like Akuapem, Ewe, and Achode are being introduced to the people of Tokuroano who solely speak Kaachi. The linguistic shape of this community has therefore enhanced bilingualism language shift which is also a kind of language shift. Though both the Kaachi and the Akuapem are Kwa language and mutually intelligible, the research will deal with the

reasons why native speakers of Kaachi have shifted to the Akuapem..

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Shift

Bodomo, Anderson & Dzahene-Quarshie (2009) defined language shift as a process in which successive generations of native speakers, both at individual and at community levels, gradually lose proficiency in their mother tongues or the language of their speech community in favor of other languages. Language shift does not happen in an abrupt manner but it is a gradual process. It may begin from the various linguistic variables (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical) through to the various domains of the language use and also a gradual response to the change from speaker to speaker. Batibo (2005) explain language shift as a situation where a group of people either partial or totality abandon their native language in favor of another one. It is that which compels speakers of a particular language to abandon their language, either willingly or under pressure, in favor of another language and for that matter, that language is used as their means of communication and socialization, Speakers of a speech community due to certain circumstances may give-up the use of their language and use another language as a lingua franca (Fasold 1984). During contact situations, external pressure such as geographical mobility and assimilation may lead to a shift situation. The speakers may consciously shift to a different language because of the prestige attached to it. This makes it clear that language shift may occur willingly or unwillingly.

According to Agyekum (2010), language shift is normally a bottom-up approach rather than the reverse. Prestige is usually on one of the reasons that purport language shift. This implies that mostly, it is the speakers of a minority language that shift to a more dominant or prestigious language. The lower-status language may want to associate itself with the higher-status language which results in a shift situation. On the contrary, the majority language may have minimal or no motivation to adopt or learn to use the minority or weaker language. Trudgill (2000) posit that, when two or more languages come into contact, the speakers may willingly take into consideration the language that satisfies the maximum linguistic and social benefits at a given time and will gradually replace the communicative function of their language with the new language. This seems to be a blend of language shift being a gradual phenomenon as well as partially a conscious choice.

Dyers (2008) commented on the generational issue associated with a group of speakers shifting to another language. He claims that language shift takes place when the younger members of a minority speech community no longer speak the language of their parents but speak a dominant majority language instead. In this situation, the language of the parents is hardly passed on to the next generation and if that happens then it means that the language of the parents may face some danger in the near future.

2.2. Language Maintenance

If language shifts are mentioned, the word that comes to mind next is language maintenance, or else language death occurs in a speech

community. Therefore when language shift is mentioned, then its other side of the same coins is language maintenance.

Batibo (2005) defines language may bring up when they come into contact.

The loyalty of the speakers of minority language is very high that they do not give up their language. Although they may be bilinguals they will not shift to take a different language. In a language maintenance situation, parents pass on their mother tongue to the younger generation despite the presence of a dominant language. Language maintenance is the situation where a language group that is bound to shift to other language under certain circumstances rather holds o their language.

(Coulmas 2005) cited in (Agyekum, 2010). Despite the amount of pressure that will compel a language group to shift to a new language they rather keep their language to use. In this situation, the speakers of both languages will have to learn each other's language to equally use both. This does not make another language prestigious over the so thus maintains the minority language.

From the above, language maintenance can be describes as a situation whereby a dominated or minority linguistic group stays loyally to its traditional language regardless of the pressure exerted by the dominant language.

3. Sociolinguistic background of Tokuroano

'Tokuroano' is a town located in the Krachi East District of the Oti Region Ghana. They were part of the people of Kete-Krachi who were evacuated from their old town Krachi to their present settlement because of the construction of the Volta dam in 1961. According to an oral narration, Tokuroano is a deduced form of the phrase 'Tokuro-ano. Tokuroano' in Akan means the edge of a cave or a hole. The narrations made it clear that this phrase forms the etymology of the town's name. The present Tokuroano's were formally staying at a place called 'Yabenae' in Kete-Krachi near the Oti River. History has it that, during the construction of the Volta lake in the year 1961, they were made to move from their old place to their present place because of the flooding that would accompanied the construction of the Dam. There have been conceptions about the etymology behind the name of the town depending on its surface form but, that seems not to be the case. Depending on the surface form, Tokuro' means hole, and 'ano' means 'mouth' and so the meaning automatically is 'hole mouth' but history proves that to be falsified information.

The truth of the matter according to Mr. Kwabena Stephen Bamforo an Elder of Tokuroano Atafie was that some hunters first came to 'Tokuroano' they saw a very big cave and they thought it to be a god, in view of that, they made the place the center of their hunting so that after they have gone round the forest hunting, they would all gather around the cave and then roost the meat they have gotten for some time and then transport the meat to their various towns to be sold and also to use some for food with their families. So they named the place "edge of a cave or around a hole TOKURO - ANO"

According to the narration because the place was discovered long before the flood, thus the construction of the Volta lake or Dam, when the government choose to Evacuate them to a town called *Ohiamankyene' which literary means poverty gives salt near Kete-Krachi, the narration claims that they opted to come to their present settlement because the hunters claimed the land there at Tokuroano was very fertile for farming and hunting. The hunters who discovered the land were called Nana kwaku Donkor, Nana Kwame Kpebu, and Nana Yaw kyeam. The first hunter to settle on the land before the evacuation was from Atafie a community in Tokuraono and that was Nana Kwaku Donkor so it became a land of the Atafie because he settled there before the evacuation. This implies that Nana kwaku Donkor and for that matter, the Atafie's are the custodians of that portion of the land even though the entire land belongs to "Krachiwura' thus Kete-Krachi Traditional area.

Eight communities were also evacuated with them to their current settlement since they were all Krachi's and for that matter farmers and hunters. The communities that were evacuated to Tokuoano are as follows; Atafie, Makokwae, Ayerafie, Okrakadwo, Kpebu, The nearby villages at the edges of Tokuroano are Domaben. Domaben is situated at the northern part of Tokuroano, Kunda, and Adumadum were all situated at the East. The rest of the communities are at the southern part of Tokuroano and they are Asukawkaw, Adonkwanta who all speak the Akuapem dialect of Akan. Ayerafie Battor, Atafie Battor, and Afada Battor all located at the west side of the town were also dominated by Ewe speakers. So it is apparent that majority of the speakers found at the edges of Tokuroano are Akuapem speakers.

Trading activities and geographical mobility made the rate of Akuapem immigrants entering the speech community became very high because the "Krachi's" are farmers and they produce a lot farm produce, as a result they had a lot of market centers and they used Akuapem as their lingua franca or trade language for businesses. This made the speakers of the Akuapem dialect out-populated the true indigenes themselves who are the 'Krachi's'. The increase in population of the speakers of Akuapem has been said to be consistent because the Akuapem now is spoken at all social centers of Tokuroano including the indigenes themselves.

Romaine (1994) posits that "In some cases shift occurs as a result of forced or voluntary migration to a place where it is not possible to maintain one's native language' but this case was a reverse.

4. Methodology

The research methodology is a type which is aimed at revealing the reasons or causes of language shift in Tokuroano. The reason for considering it as a qualitative study is because the study involves the use of various empirical materials such as case study, interview, participant observation, and historical narration. Again quantitative approach was used because the study employed the use of questionnaire which makes use of numerical values. Systematic mixed method type was used because the study employed the use of questionnaire to collect data for information on the domains of language use which was compiled in a table for analysis. It was accompanied by interview, observation, and

questionnaire to elicit information on the factors that are causing the language shift in the community.

Tokoroano, with a population of about 5,527, is apparently difficult to use the overall population in conducting the research given the short period of the study and the continuous movement of people at any given time. As a result of the above, the researcher used a sample size of fifty (50) people. They were randomly selected from the overall population in order to avoid any form of bias that may influence the final findings. This was made up of twenty-six (26) males and twenty-four (24) females. This was to ensure fairness

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaires which made the research quantitative. It was distributed to the sample size selected, the responses given; were numerically analyze at the domains of language use. The information gathered helped the researcher to identify the possible factors that have led to the language shift. Interview was sued for comprehensive information on their choice of language, to validate the results of the survey for better understanding of the shift. Interviewers were given a prior notice before the day of the interview; the data from the interview were analyzed qualitatively

5. Results and Discussion

The data analysis below shows the rate of language used in the various domains by the people of Tokuroano. The various domains are home, market, school, church, and funerals.

5.1 Home

Language is used at home to convey messages from one family member to another or non-family members. People use languages they can express themselves without any difficulty. This domain of language used is presented in the table below.

Languages used at home

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	PERCENTAGE
Krachi only	18	36%
Akuapem only	14	28%
Krachi and Akuapem	10	20%
Ewe	8	16%
TOTAL	50	100%

From the table above, it can be observed that 18 respondents representing 36% used the kaachi language as medium of communication at home while 14 of the respondents also representing 28% used Akuapem as a medium of communication at home. The table above shws that, the Akuapem language is in high competition with the kaachi language.

The difference between the use of kaachi and Akuapem is just 8% even at home. It implies that there are a lot of strangers who are not fluent in the kaachi language hence they resort to the speaking of Akuapem

5.2 Market

Market is another social domain where buying and selling is done. Language is used in this domain for sellers to convince buyers. People with different ethnic background are engaged in this domain as such there is always the need to use common and more convenient medium of language to expressing themselves. The seller and the buyer must understand each other well in order to be able to bargain well.

Below shows the statistics of languages used in this domain:

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	PERCENTAGE
Krachi-kaachi	10	20%
Akuapem	26	52%
Kaachi and Akuapem	13	26%
Ewe	1	2%
TOTAL	50	100

The table above shows that 52% of the total number of respondents makes use of the Akuapem language. The Akuapem language is found to be the medium of communication in which both the natives and the strangers can conveniently express themselves. Only 20% of the respondents were found to use kaachi language in this domain. It was also found that 26% use both Kaachi and Akuapem. Again, 2% use Ewe when buying and selling. The respondents who use both Kaachi and Akuapem language are also more than those who use kaachi language only. This indicates that the Kaachi language is being overshadow at the major social gathering like the market.

6.1.4 School

Another domain of language use is school. Cultural backgrounds come into contact and make use of language in the School. Out of the fifty respondents engaged, ten (10) of them were students and the table below shows the languages they use during their playing hours:

A table showing languages used at the school during break time

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	PERCENTAGE
Akuapem	5	50%
Kaachi	2	20%
English Kaachi and Akuapem	3	30%
TOTAL	10	100%

From the table above, it is observed that two (2) out of the total numbers of ten (10) representing 20% use Kaachi language during their play hours at school as against 50% who indicated that they use Akuapem language. Other three (3) respondents also

representing 30% said they use any of the three major languages. It is clear from the table that majority of the students use Akuapem language as against the Kaachi language. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the teachers in the school cannot express themselves fluently in the kaachi language therefore they will engage the students in either English language or the Akuapem language. Another possible cause may be due to the fact that the Ghanaian language taught in the area is the Akuapem Twi. With this, both the teachers and the students turn to use the Akuapem language more in their conversation during their play hours and learning period. With this development, one can conclude that the Akuapem language stands the chance to dominate the native language in the near future.

6.1.5 Friends

Communications among friends is part of the domains of language use. This information of how

Language used is presented the table below.

LANGUAGE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Kaachi	25	50%
Akuapem	24	48%
Ewe	1	2%
TOTAL	50	100%

The table above shows that 50% of the total respondents used by the researcher use Kaachi in their interactions with the friends they come into contact with. This can be attributed to the fact that majority of the people in Tokoroano are Krachi therefore they often engage themselves in the Kaachi language most often. This informs us that the natives still use the kaachi language whenever they meet themselves. Notwithstanding the above, it is also clear that equally a large number of the respondents thus twenty-four (24) representing 48% also use the Akuapem language in their conversations. The difference is only 2%. The growth of the Kaachi language in Tokoroano is seriously under threat.

Church

The church is a religious setting, it is a domain where language is used. People with different ethnic backgrounds meet to worship their maker God. Tokoroano is dominated by Christianity. Language plays a major role in the cause of worship. Prayers are said, songs are ministered, scriptures are read and the sermons are also delivered to the congregation.

LANGUAGE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Kaachi	5	10%
Akuapem	44	88%
Ewe	1	2%
TOTAL	50	100%

The data gathered above points out that only 10% of the church service activities are expressed in the Kaachi language. Thus 88% of the respondents indicate that Akuapem language is the main medium of expression in their churches. This means that their

songs, sermons, and even prayers are than in Akuapem. The hymns and the scriptures are not written in the kaachi language. Therefore these activities are done in the Akuapem language which is well written. Again, majority of the ministers posted to the area are not natives and cannot speak the Kaachi language hence they resort to preach in the Akuapem language.

6.1.7 Funerals

Funeral cerebtrations in Tokuroano community are social activities, where people come to morn and show their last respect with their love ones. Amidst these, people also show their love and sympathy by donating money to support the bereaved families. Funeral celebrations are accompanied with by songs and dirges and these activities are mostly done in the Akuapem language

LANGUAGE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Kaachi	15	30%
Akuapem	30	60%
Ewe	5	10%
TOTAL	50	100%

From the table above it can be deduced that only 30% of those activities are done in kaahi, whiles 60% of those activities are done in Akuapem and 5% is done Ewe language.

Causes of language shift among the Krachi's of Tokuroano

During data collection, certain factors popped up as those contributing to language shift among the Krachi's of Tokuroano. The factors that the researcher identified are explained below: First and foremost are the economic and occupational reasons. The economics and occupational factors in language shift are very crucial either from a minority to a majority language or vice versa (Salzmann2004:194). Earlier on, in this paper, it was mentioned that, in the early years the community was made up of Krachi's who were monolinguals but due to trade and other businesses, people from other language groups came to settle there.

Agyekum (2010) posits that large group of immigrants often manage to preserve their languages With regards to this, it was captured that the immigrants were more in number than the indigenes so the majority of the immigrants who are the Akuapem speakers and for that matter, the first different language group to settle in the community preserved the use of their language without converging. The other immigrants too were found to use the Akuapem due to its prestige and so the indigenes have nothing to do than as a result of the pressure at hand and for inter-ethnic communication and economic reason shift to the Akuapem gradually in order to meet their social and economic goals.

Also, another factor that has also led to language shift among the kaachi speakers of Tokuroano is as a result of education and language policy. In Ghana, languages that are studied in the schools have gone through some kind of changes thus, from one government to another. Language policy designed to be used in various educational settings to play a significant role in the quality of education aimed to be provided. The speakers of the Kaachi totally shift to the Akuapem language in their schools.

The reason for this is that, out of the number of languages spoken in Ghana, only 11 of that language are officially used in school depending on the geographical location of the school. It is worth to note that the Kaachi and the Akuapem are of the Kwa languages in Ghana and so they have a lots of their words in common so, reading and writing in Akuapem was somehow easy and cause the shift The Akuapem and AsanteTwi, Fante, Nzema, Ga, Dangme, Ewe, Dagbani, Kusaal, Gurune, and Gonja. In Oti Region where Tokuroano located, Akuapem is the official Ghanaian Language used in schools. This makes Akuapem gain a higher prestige as compared to the Kaachi and it has made it become one of the causative elements of shift among the community in Tokuroano.

Another contributing factor to language shift among the Kaachi speakers of Tokuroano from Kaachi to Akuapem is shyness, migration, and education and government policies have made the Akuapem language to be more prestigious and frequently used as compared to the Kaachi. They willingly choose to use the Akuapem language due to the social prestige attached to it. The interview made the researcher informed that some of the consultants shift just because they feel shy to speak the Kaachi language.

Another factor or the cause of language shift is the domain of language use. From the results of the questionnaire used above it is clear that the Akuapem language is frequently used in most of the public domains of language use. Some of the consultants used for the study made the researcher aware that they use or shift to the Akuapem language because that is the language used in most places such as the church, marketplace, with friends, and even in school aside English. Failure to shift may render them unable to achieve their social and economic goals.

Finally, it was clear from the interview made that, the reason why some of the Kaachi speakers of Tokuroano shift to Akuapem language is that, Kaachi is not yet reduce to writing and also Akuapem and Kaachi are related in a way so it became simple and easy to use as compared to the usage of other languages in the region. Simplification is the process involved in making a language easier to speak or learn by doing away with all the complexities of grammar and lexicon (Agyekum 2010).

7. Conclusion

The research revealed the following theoretical perspective findings:

1. The causality-based perspective

The causality-based perspective considers the factors that causes or contributes to language shift. The theoretical perspective works with the Gaelic-Arvantika model (GAM) which proposes three areas on the causes of language shift and death. These areas are the external setting or extra-linguistics factors, speech behavior/ sociolinguistic factors, and structural consequences. These three phenomena are applied to the findings raised on the causes of language shift in the case of the Kaachi speakers in Tokuroano.

2. External setting

The external setting comprises of the set of factors that creates some kind of pressure in a particular speech community to give up

its language. One of these education and language phenomena is policy. This can be categorized as a political and sociological factor under the external setting phenomena. Batibo (2005) posits that, since the political and social conditions are primary in any speech community, the phenomena of external setting have a strong impact on speech behavior. It, therefore, makes it convincing that the external setting can be the mother for other phenomena as indicated in the theoretical perspective.

3. *Speech behavior*

Speech behavior also considers the use of certain variables usually determined by some social parameters. One of the factors found under this phenomenon by the researcher as a cause of language shift in this study is shyness. It was found that because the Akuapem language has dominated in almost all the public domains, and also due to its use in the schools in the community as politically prescribed by the language policy of education, it has given it higher prestige and so the Kaachi speakers feel shy in speaking their own dialect because of the dominance.

4. *Structural consequences*

This is where some structural linguistic alterations which actually changes in speech production. Batibo (2005) points out that, according to the Gaelic-Arvatinka model, the three sets of phenomena form an implication chain where by the external setting induce some kind of speech behavior which later results in linguistic modification or alterations in the language under shift.

5. *The process-based perspective*

The process-based perspective considers the processes a language undergoes on its way to shift or death. This theory also works with Batibo's marked bilingualism model. This model also deals

Suggested measures for the Language maintenance

Below are some of the suggestions elicited by the researcher through the questionnaires and interviews from the consultants on the measures to put in place for the Kaachi language to be used by the Kaachi speakers. One of such measures is resisting language shift as a result of language contact and remaining loyal to one's language despite the degree of pressure.

Stain (2004) states that the speakers of a language hold the key to the continuation or abandonment of their language, the intergenerational transmission or non-transmission of the language, and the expansion or reduction of the domains in which it is used. Therefore, despite the amount of pressure, the speakers of the Kaachi language have to be proud and loyal to their language. They have to show higher level of divergence. If that is done, there is the tendency of other speakers converging. They do not have to look down upon their language due to the prestige gained by the contact language. They ought to put in a positive attitude in the usage of their language. This will help in considering the language in government policies for it also to gain prestige.

Government's intervention on the language policy of education can also be a way of helping speakers to maintain the use of a language. Language policy of education on the usage of a particular language as a medium of instruction makes the language gain a higher level of prestige.

Finally, another way of maintaining the use of the Kaachi in the community is its use in church which is also a sociolinguistic domain that makes effective use of language really has impact on language use. Religious bodies can translate their holy books such as the Bible into other languages.

The religious bodies translating some of their religious books into the Kaachi will enhance the use of the language in the church which is also a domain.

8. **Conclusion**

The research examined language shift from Kaachi to Akuapem and suggested measures of maintenance of the language. The objective of the study was to examine language shift from Kaachi to Akuapem and suggested measures to maintain the dialect. The research paper gave a brief sociolinguistic background of Tokuroano and examined the domains of language use in the community. The findings revealed that there is a higher level of shift. The paper also discussed the contributing factors that led to language shift in the speech community and also analyzed it in the framework of the Gaelic-Arvatinka (GAM) and marked bilingualism model under the causality-based and process-based theoretical perspectives respectively. Finally, the paper suggested language maintenance of the Kaachi language in the community to avoid language death in the near future.

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